

Our Health

Make A Difference In Your Life And In Medicine

(NAPSA)—Exercise, good nutrition and controlling stress are all excellent ways to maintain wellness, but sometimes medicines, a device or a certain procedure may also be needed. The step-by-step process that tests if new medical approaches work is called a clinical trial. Each trial seeks better ways to prevent, screen for, diagnose or treat a disease or improve quality of life. They can include testing a new drug for the treatment of high blood pressure, an inhaler for asthma, the impact of community education on preventing the onset of diabetes, or the effects of massage therapy on treating patients with cancer. Discoveries that improve health are not possible without volunteers.

Each year, more than 40,000 trials are ongoing in the U.S. that require large numbers of volunteers. Many of the diseases and conditions being studied heavily impact minority communities, such as stroke, HIV/AIDS, hypertension and prostate cancer. To ensure that these new drugs and medical approaches are safe and effective for the diverse communities in the U.S., men, women, young, old, minority and majority communities are needed to participate in these trials.

Few African American volunteers have been in these trials, unfortunately. "Having a cross representation of patients will ensure that whatever is being tested, be it a drug, device or new procedure, will have the intended benefit and not be harmful to people with racial, genetic, gender, age or lifestyle differences," said Felicia Glover, nurse.

To ensure that everyone, including African Americans, is aware of and a potential participant in clinical trials, the National Medical Association (NMA) created Project I.M.P.A.C.T. (Increase Minority Participation and Aware-



You don't need to be a doctor or nurse to make a difference in medicine. Participating in a clinical trial can be your opportunity.

ness of Clinical Trials). Dr. Willarda Edwards, president of the NMA, the voice of African American physicians, says that although there have been grave concerns associated with some past trials, today, many of those fears have been addressed and the abuses have been corrected as physicians, researchers, community advocates and the federal government take great steps to ensure that the process is designed to be safe for volunteers. Talk to your physician or health care provider about clinical trials and how participation may impact you or a family member's health and wellness. "I am more educated about my medical condition as a result of volunteering for my trial. I felt that I made a difference in my life and in medicine," according to Regina Valentine, a clinical trial participant.

Visit websites such as www.clinicaltrials.gov, operated by the National Library of Medicine, to learn more about clinical trials and opportunities to participate. Call 1-800-NMA-0554, ext. 261 or visit www.impact.nmanet.org to receive a free copy of "You've Got the Power!," an informative booklet about clinical trials from the National Medical Association.